

PAY JUSTICE OR A SLAP IN THE FACE? FIGHT FOR 25% NOW

Hundreds of thousands of NHS workers have been excluded from a public-sector pay rise, but with overwhelming public support, militant action can win pay justice for all

The government's decision to exclude hundreds of thousands of nurses from the public sector pay rise is a slap in the face to people who for many weeks were applauded on the streets as heroes in the war against covid-19. But the fulsome praise of the Tories turned out to be sickening hypocrisy.

This should be no surprise when we remember how they delayed recognising the danger of the pandemic, then bungled the introduction of PPI, even for frontline health workers. Their criminal negligence is responsible for the scale of death toll 54,000 and rising.

Even the limited pay rise is just an exercise in rebranding independent pay review board recommendations as a government 'reward' is a slap in the face for three million public sector workers left out.

NHS doctors and dentists will receive a pay boost – but nurses, support staff, outsourced workers and those working in the social care sector get nothing except a return to price-gouging charges to park at their own workplaces.

Excuses

More than 540 NHS and social care workers have died from covid-19. These workers have been the backbone of the health system's response to the pandemic, working overtime in horrendous conditions to save people's lives in the face of the official negligence and complacency.

The government's pathetic excuse is that nurses are already getting a 4.4% pay rise this year under the terms of the three-year Agenda for Change pay deal agreed in 2018. But the majority of frontline nurses are on Band 5 – and so received an insulting 1.65% rise in April.

This paltry sum was the handiwork of the leaderships of nurses' unions the RCN and Unison who deliberately misrepresented the deal to their members, meaning that on average

nurses received less than half the 3% first-year rise which was agreed.

A grassroots revolt resulted in an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the RCN leadership and forced the resignation of its general secretary Janet Davies. Despite the unions' claims to have 'broken' the 1 per cent pay cap, this fake increase has still left the vast majority of healthworkers' pay 20 per cent lower in real terms than in 2010.

The pay deal ends this year, so the nationwide protests on 8 August must be the launchpad for a massive campaign to compensate for this betrayal and fight to restore pay to pre-2010 levels.

The vast majority of the public sector workforce has seen real pay slashed by similar amounts due to the 1 per cent pay cap. The massive coronavirus bailouts for big business shows the government can afford it.

NHS crisis

The pandemic has laid bare the consequences of decades of marketisation, outsourcing and underfunding of the NHS and social care services.

There are currently 40,000 vacancies in the NHS alone. Brexit will pile on the pressure as thousands of skilled healthcare workers opt to leave the country than be subject to the humiliation of working for poverty wages under a government that blames them for its own failings.

The precipitate return to work, defying all scientific advice, is inevitably preparing the ground for a second wave in the Autumn, piling on the pressure as we enter the now annual feature of the NHS winter crisis.

Other countries brought the private sector into at least temporary public ownership in order to cope with the pandemic. In Britain the government forced the NHS to pay the profiteers! Despite their hypocritical clapping,

the Tories are determined to use the pandemic health crisis to continue running our health service into the ground, buckling under the debt-bondage of PFI deals, shortstaffing, preparing to parcel off the profitable bits to their backers in the US health industry.

Only the total renationalisation of the entire NHS and its extension to social care, under the control of elected committees of healthcare workers and patients, and fully funded by taxing the wealth of the rich can halt the decline and lay the basis for a health care system fit for the challenges of childhood obesity, an ageing population and pollution related illnesses.

Resistance

This government has a large majority, but faced with mounting crises, it has been forced under popular pressure to make u-turn after u-turn on everything from free school meals in the holidays, to scrapping the punitive and racist migrant surcharge for NHS workers.

An overwhelming 69% of the public support the extension of the pay rise to all NHS workers, including nurses, cleaners, porters and midwives.

Militant action by grassroots activists can mobilise pressure and the NHS can lead the way in winning pay justice for all. The TUC and the other unions should press their claims together as the first step in the fight to ensure our pay and conditions aren't sacrificed to pay for the coronavirus crisis.

- 25% pay rise for all grades to restore pay levels
- Massive recruitment drive to fill vacancies
- Production and distribution of PPE under public ownership
- End all outsourcing
- Scrap PFI deals with no compensation to profiteers
- Scrap the migrant NHS surcharge

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

RED FLAG – REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION fights for the abolition of capitalism through social revolution, workers' power and a planned economy. Our goal is communism: a classless society which heralds the final liberation of humanity from exploitation, oppression and war.

Capitalism is a crisis-ridden system that repeatedly plunges the world into destructive phases of economic downturn, instability and war. Private ownership of the means of production obstructs the development of human potential and condemns billions to poverty while a handful of oligarchs monopolise wealth and resources.

The alternative to capitalism is generated by the class struggle of the modern working class which repeatedly organises resistance to the ruling capitalist class. Today, with

global capitalism again entering an historic crisis, working class resistance is springing up everywhere against the capitalists' attempts to defend their system at our expense.

By developing a new revolutionary leadership, the working class can unify its resistance to the capitalist offensive and convert it into a challenge to the rule of capital itself. This means overthrowing the capitalist class in an armed revolution, breaking up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state and replacing it with the rule of councils of recallable delegates from workplaces and working class communities, guarded and defended by a workers' militia.

The principal obstacle to the victory of the working class resistance is the leadership of the working class movement itself. From

social-democrats (Labour) through to the mainstream Communist parties with their Stalinist ideology, the mass political parties of the working class movement have long since abandoned the road of revolution. Their reformist ideology not only obscures the road to working class power, but systematically disorganises resistance to the health, economic, and environmental crises today.

The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to challenge the misleadership of social democracy and Stalinism, but since 1951 has abandoned this task and everywhere adapts to their leadership. For this reason, we everywhere raise the call for the formation of a new world party of social revolution, a Fifth International.

If you are a class struggle fighter, if you are an internationalist - join us!

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Red Flag is a bi-monthly magazine of revolutionary news, analysis and strategy published by the British section of the League for the Fifth International. We are a fighting organisation for activists in the class struggle in Britain and abroad. Our mission is to advocate the programme and party necessary for the seizure of power and implementation of socialism by the working class. We have a world to win!



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